



Fear Is Not Our Future

Lessons From Elijah And Elisha

Growth Group Curriculum

February 12, 2023 – 2 Kings 2:19-25; Romans 8:20-23; 1 Kings 12:26-30; Leviticus 26:21-22; Luke 23:39-43
“A Tale of Two Cities”

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

In our text we see two very different responses to Elisha. The city of Jericho (v.19-22) asks Elisha to heal the waters and restore the springs so that there would be drinkable water, and water that could be used to grow crops. It should be noted that the city of Jericho had received a curse, in Joshua 6:26, which said that anyone who rebuilt the city would be under a curse. The city had been rebuilt during the time of Ahab. (See 1 Kings 16:34 and how the curse was fulfilled).

Elisha has some very strange directions, but the people of Jericho are obedient to what he asks for. He throws some salt into the spring and the waters are healed. This “healing” of the waters is a visible sign that the mantle of Elijah has now passed to Elisha. He is the new prophet of God.

As Elisha journeys on, he arrives at Bethel – the house of God. Although, as we soon learn, God is not worshipped in this city. Ever since the days Jeroboam and the division of Israel, into two nations, the worship of God had not been a central part of Bethel’s. Jeroboam set up calves for the people to worship so that they would not go up to Jerusalem.

The “boys” are, more than likely, not younger boys, but apprentices of the false prophets of Bethel. The Hebrew word “na’ar” can also be translated servant. See 2 Samuel 16:1 and Ruth 2:5-6. These young men, or young adults, want nothing to do with Elisha and his God.

Elisha calls down a curse which is reminiscent of Leviticus 26:22. If the people of God will not listen and obey, there will be consequences. This curse can be seen as the suspension of the covenant promise given to Abraham. It also reverses the words given to Adam and Eve about being fruitful and multiplying.

The stories of the two cities comes to an end with Elisha on his way to Samaria. Jericho has chosen to trust their future to God and Bethel has continued to reject the God who brings life and hope. Because they do not listen and do not ask God for help, the Bible makes it clear that there are consequences.

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Exploring the Text

2 Kings 2:19-25

¹⁹ The people of the city said to Elisha, “Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive.” ²⁰ “Bring me a new bowl,” he said, “and put salt in it.” So they brought it to him. ²¹ Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, “This is what the LORD says: ‘I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.’” ²² And the water has remained pure to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken. ²³ From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. “Get out of here, baldy!” they said. “Get out of here, baldy!” ²⁴ He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. ²⁵ And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria.

Romans 8:20-23

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that^[a] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

1 Kings 12:26-30

²⁶ Jeroboam thought to himself, “The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. ²⁷ If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.” ²⁸ After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.” ²⁹ One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. ³⁰ And this thing became a sin; the people came to worship the one at Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other.^[a]

Leviticus 26:21-22

²¹ “If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve. ²² I will send wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children, destroy your cattle and make you so few in number that your roads will be deserted.

Luke 23:39-43

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

1. In 2 Kings 2:19-23 and 1 Kings 12:26-30, we read about two different cities in which Elisha called upon God in two different ways. What lessons can we learn from these scripture passages?
2. There are many “if-then” conditional statements in the Bible. Select one of these and describe what the statement tells you about the “full counsel of God.”
3. As you read the various stories of both the Old and the New Testaments, what does the Bible tell us about God’s wrath?



4. Why is it important for us to recognize and talk about God's wrath? Why is this so difficult for many of us?
5. Miroslav Volf said: "God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love." How does the wrath of God prove He is a God of love?
6. Pastor Paul told us that the cup Jesus referred to in his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, was the cup of God's wrath. How does this image impact your thoughts about God's love for you?
7. The title of our current sermon series is "Fear is Not Our Future." How do you reconcile this statement with this week's discussion of God's wrath?

